

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: SHIFT IN TERRORIST TACTICS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

REF: BELFAST 35

1. SUMMARY. THE PROVISIONAL IRA SHIFTED TACTICS AFTER THE FEBRUARY 17 LA MON MASSACRE. THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY A FEW FIRE BOMB ATTACKS SINCE THEN, AND EMPHASIS HAS SWUNG TO SWHOOTING AT SECURITY FORCES. THERE HAD BEEN HINTS AFTER LA MON THAT PIRA WOULD MAKE THIS SWITCH. OBVIOUSLY, IT JUDGES THAT CONTINUING THE FIRE BOMB CAMPAIGN WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE IN VIEW OF THE MOMENTARY REACTION TO LA MON, BUTS IMAGE OF AN OFFENSIVE FORCE MUST BE MAINTAINED. LOYALIST EXTREMISTS MAY BE REACTING. PRESSURES CONTINUE FOR TOUGHER GOVERNMENT ACTION, BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS RESISTING A BASIC CHANGE. END SUMMARY.

2. PIRA SHOOTING: THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW FIREBOMBS IN PAST DAYS AND A COUPLE OF BOMB ATTEMPTS AGAINST SECURITY FORCES, WHICH LEFT ONE POLICEMAN STUNNED. BUT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF SHOOTINGS AND TWO DRAMATIC KILLINGS: ON FEBRUARY 28 AUTOMATIC FIRE GOT A POLICEMAN IN A VEHICLE IN DOWNTOWN LONDONDERRY, AND THE NEXT DAY A SOLDIER ON PATROL IN NORTHERN BELFAST WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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KILLED BY AN M-60 MACHINEGUN.

3. THE TECHNIQUE USED IN THE LATTER CASE HAD NOT BEEN SEEN IN MANY MONTHS; THREE MEN POSING AS WORKMEN FINAGLED THEIR WAY INTO AN OLD WOMEN'S HOME AND SHOT FROM AN UPPER WINDOW AT A 40-YARD RANGE. SOME 40 ROUNDS WERE FIRED IN A THREE-SECOND BURST, AND IN THIS CASE THE M-60 WAS EFFECTIVE. BUT

IT HAD TO BE MOVED INTO AND OUT OF THE HOUSE IN A WHEELBARROW, WHICH REQUIRED A HIJACKED VAN, SO THAT THE SIZE OF THE GUN RESTRICTS ITS DEPLOYMENT.

4. SO FAR THIS YEAR THE DEATH TOLL IS 22, OF WHICH 20 WERE IN FEBRUARY. THIS NUMBER ALREADY EXCEEDS THAT FOR THE LAST FIVE MONTHS OF 1977. SECURITY FORCES KILLED ONE PROVISIONAL, LOYALISTS PROBABLY TWO OTHER PERSONS, AND PIRA 19 -- INCLUDING THE 12 AT LA MON.

5. GOVERNMENT ACTIONS: AS FAR AS CAN BE JUDGED FROM PUBLIC STATEMENTS, THE PERPETRATORS OF THE LA MON BURNING HAVE NOT BEEN TRACED. ONE OF THE SENIOR SINN FEIN LEADERS PICKED UP AFTERWARD, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH PIRA MEMBERSHIP, WHICH IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE. HE IS GERRY ADAMS, A FORMER INTERNEE. PROVING MEMBERSHIP IN PIRA OF SUCH A SINN FEIN LEADER WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT POLICE SUCCESS.

6. ARMY COVERT SOLDIERS (SAS) STAKING OUT A FIND OF BOMBS IN CENTRAL ULSTER FEBRUARY 26 SHOT AND KILLED ONE PIRA MEMBER AND SERIOUSLY WOUNDED ANOTHER. THE ARMY SAYS THE MEN REFUSED TO STOP WHEN WARNED. PIRA SAYS THEY WERE UNARMED AND WERE SHOT WHILE TRYING TO SURRENDER. THE YOUNG MAN KILLED, PAUL DUFFY, WAS A NEPHEW OF A SENIOR LEADER OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY, PADDY DUFFY, WHO IS KNOWN FOR HIS STAUNCHLY DEMOCRATIC AND NON-VIOLENT POSITION. THIS INCIDENT UNCLASSIFIED

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POIGNANTLY SHOWS THE ATTRACTION OF THE IRA EVEN FOR YOUNG MEN WITH GOOD PROSPECTS.

7. LOYALIST COUNTERATTACK?: LOYALIST EXTREMISTS MAY HAVE PLANTED A BLAST/GASOLINE BOMB FOUND UNEXPLODED AT A HOTEL IN CATHOLIC WEST BELFAST. AND LOYALIST FACTIONAL RIVALRY MAY HAVE BEEN BEHIND THE BOMBING WHICH DESTROYED A WELL KNOWN LOYALIST PUB ON SHANKILL ROAD. PIRA DENIED RESPONSIBILITY IN BOTH CASES. THERE HAS BEEN NO CONCLUSIVE SIGN OF LOYALIST PARAMILITARY ACTION, BUT SEVERAL SOURCES BELIEVE SOMETHING IS IN THE WORKS.

8. PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT. LOYALIST PRESSURE CONTINUES FOR A TOUGHER GOVERNMENT LINE AGAINST PIRA. MANY PEOPLE RESENTED THE RELEASE OF ALL THE SUSPECTS PICKED UP AFTER LA MON, EXCEPT FOR A FEW, WHO ARE HELD ON UNRELATED CHARGES. THE GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS GIVES NO INDICATION OF WILLINGNESS TO MAKE ANY MAJOR CHANGE. SECRETARY OF STATE MASON REPORTEDLY TURNED DOWN AN OFFICIAL UNIONIST REQUEST FOR THE REINTRODUCTION OF INTERNMENT, AND IN AN EMOTIONAL APPEAL FOR PUBLIC SUPPORT OF THE POLICE, POLICE CHIEF CONSTABLE SIR KENNETH NEWMAN STOOD FOR ACTION WITHIN THE RULE OF LAW THAT DOES NOT ALIENATE THE

BROAD CATHOLIC COMMUNITY.

9. ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL PROPONENTS OF HARSHNESS IS REV. IAN PAISLEY. IRONICALLY, HE APPEARED IN COURT MARCH 2 ON A CHARGE OF OBSTRUCTING THE POLICE DURING LAST MAY'S UNSUCCESSFUL POLITICAL STRIKE, WHICH AIMED TO FORCE A TOUGHER LINE AGAINST PIRA. PAISLEY HAS CHARGED POLICE HARASSMENT. ON MARCH 2 HE ARGUED THAT HE HAD ARRANGED HIS ARREST WITH THE POLICE IN ORDER TO DEFUSE A POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION WITH OBSTREPEROUS STRIKERS. STOUT

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